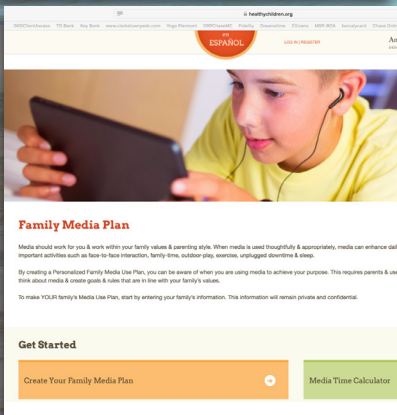




How much Screen Time Should My Child Have?

Make sure you have media-free times together!

by Erica Berg, MD



How can children use *television-smartphone-ipad-computer-media* in a healthy way? We turn to our *American Academy of Pediatrics* for policies about children's health. Until now, the *AAP* had discouraged **any** screen time for children under the age of 2. New research has given them reasons to update their advice :

Avoid screen media in children under 18 months, except video chatting which is fine for children of any age.

Parents with toddlers between 18 months and 2 years of age who choose to introduce digital media should make a plan about their child's screen use, always with high-quality programming. They should also be with their children as they watch. Toddlers rely on their caregivers to help them grasp the concepts and words they see and hear.

While the recommendations loosened a bit for toddlers, they are a bit more strict for kids age 2 to 5! The *AAP* now says that entertainment time, including use of apps and TV, should be capped at **no more than one hour**, decreased from the old recommendation of two hours. More use has been linked to obesity, sleep problems and other issues. However, watching a moderate amount of high-quality programming like *Sesame Street*, has been shown to improve cognitive and social outcomes and reading (literacy) in children aged 3 to 5.

For children 6 and older, place consistent limits on time spent using media. Make sure it does not interfere with adequate physical activity, sleep, and other healthy media free activities. Teach online respect.

This policy shifts the thinking regarding media and is asking parents to be mentors or guides for their young kids as they encounter all these new technologies.

Of course, parents don't have to feel pressured to introduce screens. These are very intuitive machines and can be integrated at any time.

The emphasis is no longer just on how much time kids spend using digital media, but how they use it.

Take a look at the **Family Media Use Plan** at **healthychildren.org!**

www.healthychildren.org/English/media or [/Spanish/media](http://www.healthychildren.org/Spanish/media)

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